

WORKERS WORLD

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Immigrants deserve legalization Full Rights for ALL WORKERS

By Teresa Gutierrez

On March 21, tens, perhaps hundreds of thousands of people will be demonstrating for immigrant rights in Washington, D.C.

The action arises from the frustration and deep anger that exist in the immigrant community and among their supporters that despite a nonstop demand for full rights for immigrants, especially legalization for the undocumented, such pleas have been ignored by Washington.

The huge March 21 demonstration will continue the massive outpouring of millions of workers in the spring of 2006, when immigrants poured out of the shadows and burst onto the scene, forever changing the political landscape in this country.

Immigrants and their supporters know that the undocumented have earned legalization. In fact, they have earned it a hundred times over.

Workers are forced to come to the very country — the U.S. — that has created the conditions back home that leave them no other option but to leave.

NAFTA, the U.S.-backed wars in Central America, agreements with migrant-exporting countries such as the Philippines, the ongoing intervention and occupation of Haiti, the coup in Honduras, the refusal to pay reparations for the historic plundering of Africa, are all examples of U.S. policies abroad that mean that millions must painfully leave their homelands in search of survival.

Then when workers arrive in the U.S. they are forced to work in the underground economy with absolutely no rights.

It is a perfect system for the capitalist class: a vulnerable, exploitable, expendable, cheap labor force that must serve the whims of the bosses.

Despite the mantra that is constantly stated that immigration policy is broken, it does indeed work. But it is working for the bosses and the bankers, not for the people.

The demonstration on March 21 and all efforts to win rights for immigrants are extremely important. But what will come out of this demonstration is equally important.

What kind of reform?

There is a widespread movement for what is called comprehensive immigration reform. It is important to continue to elaborate exactly what kind

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LEGALIZATION NOW!

Today, March 21, we march in Washington DC to tell the Obama administration that the time for immigration reform is now. **But not just any immigration reform!** We need immigration reform that:

- ▶ Grants immediate legalization
- ▶ Ends guest worker programs
- ▶ End border militarization
- ▶ STOP THE RAIDS
- ▶ Repeal NAFTA & unfair trade policies
- ▶ End U.S. foreign policy that forces migration like support for the Honduras coup or U.S. occupation of Haiti.
- ▶ Immediate legalization or amnesty for Haitian immigrants
- ▶ Education as a right for all students, regardless of place of birth or economic status.
- ▶ End the trafficking of women; Full rights for domestic workers
- ▶ Stops U.S. support of governments like the Philippines that make export of workers economic policy
- ▶ Reform that benefits all workers, that means jobs for all
- ▶ We demand solidarity not divisions

Say NO to the Schumer bill! Immigration policy is not a security issue: it is a human rights issue, it is a workers issue. This is why we march in Washington today.

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WORKERS WORLD EDITORIAL

What will it take to end the wars?

There can no longer be any doubt about the character of the wars being waged by the U.S. government in Iraq and Afghanistan.

They are not just Bush-Cheney wars, although these mass murderers should not be left off the hook.

They represent more than a mistaken policy or a particularly brutal group of politicians in the pockets of the oil companies.

These wars flow from the economic system that prevails in the United States. The class that sits atop this vast capitalist economy is never satisfied. Millionaires have become billionaires largely on the super-profits wrung from their worldwide empire.

The imperialists cannot be reasoned with, made to see the error of their ways, or appealed to on a humanitarian basis. The all-mighty profit motive is too strong for that. They will not concede that their ambition to control the world — over the dead bodies of Iraqis, Afghans and U.S. soldiers — is impossible to achieve. Not until they are confronted with rebellion at home as well as abroad will they reconsider their course of action, as finally happened with the Vietnam War.

This explains why the current wars seem to go on endlessly, why the invasion of Iraq has lasted seven years and the assault on Afghanistan even longer.

It explains why a Democratic administration, elected very largely on the hope that it would bring home the

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Immigrants deserve legalization

Full rights for all workers

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of immigration reform is needed. The movement — not just immigrants, but labor, the anti-war and all progressive movements — must demand immigration reform that is thoroughly pro-worker.

This kind of reform will lift the standard of living not only for immigrants but also for the whole working class. This immigration reform must at least include:

- ▶ Immediate legalization for all the undocumented in this country
- ▶ An end of the militarization of the border, which is an act of war and fosters a xenophobia mentality
- ▶ Stopping the raids now and ending the division of families
- ▶ Ending U.S. foreign policy that creates the conditions for migration such as support for the Honduran coup
- ▶ Repealing U.S. trade policies like NAFTA
- ▶ Jobs for all workers in this country regardless of place of birth
- ▶ Education for all regardless of place of birth or economic status
- ▶ No guest worker programs
- ▶ Recognition of the role climate change plays in creating refugees and policies to prevent it

It is clear where the Republican Party stands on the immigration question. While having nuances of differences here and there, overwhelmingly this party continues to maintain a vicious anti-immigrant position. The far-right inside and outside the party uses immigration as one of the issues to whip up a rabid right-wing campaign. It is racist and targets the first Black president in an inexcusable way.

In response to the massive organizing for the March 21 demonstration, an extreme anti-immigrant group called NumbersUSA held a press conference. At it, a member said, “ ... the new welfare queen today is women coming from Mexico with a bunch of babies. We have babies, they have dependents.”

This is thoroughly anti-poor, no matter national origin or color. The Mexican woman is today’s target, but their rhetoric is aimed against all poor women.

While the position of the Republicans and the far-right is clear and easy to fight, it is not so clear with the Democrats.

Two major bills from Democrats are up for consideration in Congress. One is by New York Sen. Charles Schumer and the other from Illinois Rep. Luis Gutierrez. Gutierrez already introduced his bill in December 2009; Schumer has not yet done so.

Rep. Gutierrez’s bill is the more progressive. Gutierrez has been traveling around the country speaking to huge audiences about passing “comprehensive immigration reform.” His talks fill Latinos/as with pride about their background.

His 700-page-long bill is officially named the Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America’s Security and Prosperity Act. The acronym CIR ASAP is clever.

But the bill goes along with the argument that the immigration issue and therefore immigrants are part and parcel of the so-called “war on terror.” Whatever their personal beliefs, Democrats have not confronted this militaristic thinking.

They will not stand up and declare that the real terrorists are in the Pentagon and on Wall Street and call-

ing the shots in Washington. They will not declare that the real terrors in society are the policies that shut down factories, evict people from their homes, violate the environment and so on.

Workers looking for survival are not terrorists. They are the victims of terror. Any immigration bill that has “enforcement” as its heart is an immigration bill that should be rejected.

Unfortunately, Democrats will tell the movement this is the best they can get. When immigration advocates asked Schumer to refrain from calling the undocumented “illegal aliens,” he refused. Schumer said that is the way it is.

The movement must decide

Throughout U.S. history, the capitalist class and the officials in Washington that do its bidding have always declared in one way or another, “That is the way it is.”

They will not point out that history shows just the opposite. When workers are in motion, when the movement is massive, what “is the way it is” can be radically changed from one day to the next.

Slavery was abolished when many said it would not be. Women won the right to vote when many said they could not. The war in Vietnam was ended due to the resistance of the people of Vietnam, but the movement in the U.S. was also instrumental.

Unemployment insurance, the 8-hour day and welfare were all gains that the people were able to wrest from the capitalist class. Nothing was given to us. All of it was won.

Legalization without enforcement and without a militarization of the border can be won.

But this can only happen if the people are fighting for their own interests independent of the Democrats. The Democratic Party has shown over and over again that it puts a brake on the struggle. It will only fight for band-aids, and it will never stand up to the powers that be, despite the good intentions of many individuals.

As hundreds of thousands march on Washington on March 21, they must keep this in mind. We must be vigilant in the days following that neither Schumer nor Gutierrez uses the momentum of the demonstration to back their bills. This would be opportunistic and a misinterpretation of the demonstrators who sacrificed to come to Washington.

Make no mistake about it: the masses in Washington on March 21 want legalization.

One way to assure that the demand for legalization prevails is to build the mobilizations for May Day 2010 around the country.

May Day is a signal to the ruling class that we are marching independent of the big business parties. May Day is a day when workers around the world march. It is a historic day that is filled with the spirit of class struggle.

This year’s May Day promises to be unique. In many areas around the country, it is attracting not just immigrants or immigrant rights activists. It is attracting more and more students, unions, organizations for the homeless, youth, anti-war organizations and organizations fighting for jobs or against foreclosures.

If united and militant, this is the kind of mobilization that can wrest what is rightfully ours, including legalization.

The author is co-coordinator of the New York May 1 Coalition for Immigrant Rights.

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National Office
55 W. 17 St.
New York, NY 10011
212-627-2994
www.workers.org

Atlanta
P.O. Box 5565
Atlanta, GA 30307
404-627-0185
atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
c/o Solidarity Center
2011 N. Charles St., Bsm.
Baltimore, MD 21218
443-909-8964
baltimore@workers.org

Boston
284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
617-522-6626
Fax 617-983-3836
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
367 Delaware Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14202
716-883-2534
buffalo@workers.org

Chicago
27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
Chicago, IL 60606
773-381-5839
chicago@workers.org

Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
216-531-4004
cleveland@workers.org

Denver
denver@workers.org

Detroit
5920 Second Ave.
Detroit, MI 48202
313-459-0777
detroit@workers.org

Durham, N.C.
durham@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 3454
Houston
TX 77253-3454
713-503-2633
houston@workers.org

Los Angeles
5274 W Pico Blvd
Suite # 207
Los Angeles, CA 90019
la@workers.org
323-306-6240

Milwaukee
milwaukee@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia
PA 19101
610-931-2615
phila@workers.org

Pittsburgh
pittsburgh@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
585-436-6458
rochester@workers.org

San Diego, Calif.
P.O. Box 33447
San Diego
CA 92163
619-692-0355

San Francisco
2940 16th St., #207
San Francisco
CA 94103
415-738-4739
sf@workers.org

Tucson, Ariz.
tucson@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300
Washington, DC 20037
dc@workers.org

Workers World
55 West 17 Street
New York, N.Y. 10011
Phone: (212) 627-2994
Fax: (212) 675-7869
E-mail: ww@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org
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1,200 tenants meet to fight for their homes

By Paddy Colligan
New York

Twelve hundred tenants from Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village (ST-PCV) met March 13 to prepare a housing battle that can impact on tenants of all incomes throughout New York City.

The latest indication of the worsening housing crisis in the city is that foreclosures on multifamily housing have surpassed those on individual homes. Some 100,000 apartments, 10 percent of the housing market in New York City, are in buildings whose owners are delinquent on their payments or who have already been foreclosed. Complex real estate deals made at the top of the housing bubble are crashing down, threatening to make renters in New York City the next wave of victims of capitalist profit grabbing.

Among the most recent casualties are the tenants at three middle-income rent-stabilized complexes — Riverton Houses in Harlem, and ST-PCV on the East Side between 14th and 23rd Streets. Each of these complexes was purchased within the last five years for enormously high prices based on speculation of even higher prices and profits to come.

The success of these complicated deals required the already overvalued real estate market to continue to expand. It also required replacing tenants paying stable, lower rents with tenants paying at the then-market rate which was two and three times higher.

The Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. originally financed all three complexes in the immediate post-World War II period of extreme housing shortages. In the intervening years these large project-type complexes with over 12,500 apartments provided stable housing options attractive to working families wanting to live in Manhattan.

Profit-seeking real estate interests targeted even these 60-year-old apartment buildings. These interests were determined to replace affordable housing with units out of the reach of all but the highest paid rising young executives and professionals — who themselves might have to double up and share housing to pay the exorbitant monthly rent.

But tenants are not passive victims in this shell game. On a day of high wind and driving rain, over 1,200 wet people came out to a meeting of the ST-PCV Tenants Association to learn about plans and pos-

sibilities for fighting back. Tenant advocates, lawyers, politicians, and financial advisors explained to the solemn and attentive audience the things tenants could do to hold on to their homes.

Key to victory: tenant unity

While New York City's rent laws favoring tenants have been whittled down in the decades since they were established, there are still points of leverage that can be used to protect tenant rights. The key to success, speakers emphasized repeatedly at the meeting, would be tenant unity.

Last year a stunning tenant victory in the courts resulted in a significant rollback of rents and the reassertion of rent stabilization throughout many of New York City's middle income complexes. This victory involved a legal suit some ST-PCV market-rate tenants initiated. The courts eliminated the division between the market-rate and the rent-stabilized tenants at ST-PCV by putting all the apartments back under the rent-stabilization regulations.

Another aspect of the tenants' plan to keep their homes is to use the recently bailed out Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac corporations. These are government-sponsored entities established starting in the

1930s Great Depression to promote home ownership. These corporations have been privately owned since 1968 and 1970, respectively.

In the big real estate deals of recent years Fannie and Freddie had strayed far from their original mission of promoting home ownership and affordable housing. In the ST-PCV deal, for example, they had invested at least hundreds of millions of dollars in a deal which would only be profitable if affordable housing were eliminated.

As Fannie and Freddie faced huge investment losses in the souring real estate market, they received billions in taxpayer bailout funds and are now approximately 80 percent owned by the government. Now they at least pay lip service to preserving affordable housing.

While the final stages of foreclosure and finding new owners are yet to play out for ST-PCV, the best outcome for tenants will depend on maintaining unity and creatively using what favorable laws are still on the books. A tenant victory at ST-PCV, and the process of organizing to achieve it, will influence the even bigger and broader fight that looms ahead: the one needed to preserve the city-wide rent-stabilization regulations now set to expire in June 2011. □

Boston city councilors hear report from Haiti

Seven Boston City Councilors attended an eyewitness report from Haiti in Boston City Hall on March 11. City Councilors Chuck Turner and Charles Yancey hosted the meeting, which filled the Piemonte Room. In Turner's introductory speech, he called for a grassroots mobilization demanding the restoration of democracy in Haiti.

After a moving song by an elementary school children's choir from a local Haitian church, Boaz Hilaire of the Boston School Bus Drivers, United Steel Workers Local 8751, who had just returned from a relief trip to Haiti, described how he saw U.S. military personnel everywhere in Haiti but no aid being distributed.

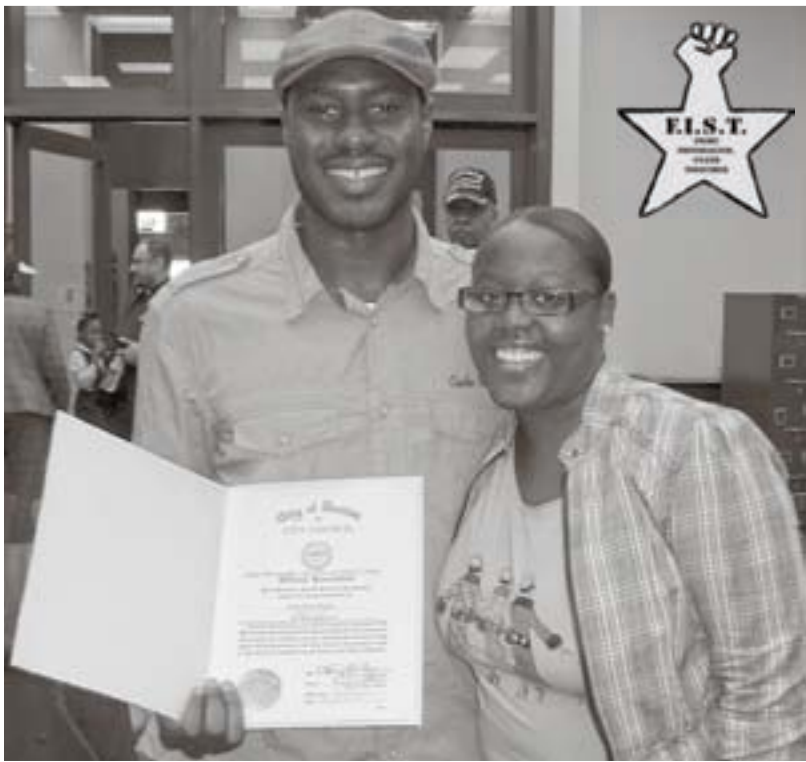
Turner then introduced Jenny Ulysse, a Boston teenager and community youth organizer who had been caught in the rubble of a building in the earthquake. Ulysse told how, though she needed immediate medical assistance, the U.S. Embassy failed to come to her aid — because she is a permanent resident green card holder and not a citizen.

She described the conditions in Haiti where bodies are still unburied and pigs are roaming free, eating human cadavers, and are in turn eaten by hungry Haitian people, spreading disease. Ulysse expressed her intention to return to Haiti to help with reconstruction.

Turner read City Council resolutions that recognized Jonathan Regis of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST), Andrea Yarde of the District 7 office, and Horace Small of the United Minority Neighborhoods for their work in helping Ulysse successfully return to Boston. The meeting also recognized the international campaign of support for Ulysse and all permanent residents to return to the U.S. from Haiti.

Claude St. Germain, newly elected Coordinator for Fanmi Lavalas of Boston, described the lack of democracy in Haiti and how Washington is trying to force elections from which Fanmi Lavalas is excluded. He called for the return of democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

— Frank Neisser



FIST organizer Jonathan Regis with Jenny Ulysse.

WW PHOTO: STEVE KIRSCHBAUM

2004 DNC protester wins

Federal court victory against Secret Service

By Frank Neisser
Boston

Culminating a years-long legal struggle and a week-long trial, on March 12 a federal jury found the Secret Service had carried out a de facto arrest without probable cause when agents dragged Indian-American Vijay Shah from a July 2004 protest march at the Democratic National Convention in Boston. Agents handcuffed Shah, dragged him to a police car and took him to a police station where he was held in handcuffs in a holding cell.

After intervention by protest supporters and his attorney, John Pavlos, Shah was released without charges. Secret Service agent Darin Czelcz was found liable for violation of Shah's Fourth Amendment constitutional rights. Pavlos was the legal observer for the protest march,

which was organized by the International Action Center, the Answer Coalition and other forces. Pavlos met Shah for the first time while Shah was held handcuffed on the steps at City Hall Plaza. He offered to represent him on the spot, and Shah accepted.

Shah had come looking for the protest, which had begun and marched by the convention center where the DNC was to be held the following day before he got there. After looking around the area Shah found and joined the demonstration as it marched back from the convention site to the Boston Common. Witnesses at the trial described how Secret Service agents and Boston Police grabbed him from behind, held him in handcuffs on some steps by Boston City Hall, forced him into a police car and whisked him away, while supporters from the demonstration chanted,

“Let him go!” and “Racial profiling!”

Shah spoke to Workers World after the trial. When asked why he sued the Secret Service, he stated: “They violated my rights. I felt the need to guard and protect our rights under the Constitution, and hold the Secret Service accountable. I didn't want what happened to me to happen to anyone else.”

Shah called the verdict “an extraordinary rebuke of the Secret Service and victory for people's rights against racial profiling and abuse of police power. It was very clear the Secret Service was pressed by this case. Throughout the trial they had phalanx of up to 15 Secret Service agents all dressed in dark blue suits with lapel pins and crew cuts attempting to intimidate me and the jury. When I testified they tried to stare me down, but I wouldn't be intimidated. We also had

allies in court giving me support as well as other witnesses ... who spoke truth to power.”

Shah continued: “In the end the jury saw through their attempts to demonize me, invoke fears of post-9/11 security concerns and paint me as having done something wrong, and found the Secret Service agent liable for having in fact arrested me without probable cause, in violation of my Fourth Amendment rights against unreasonable searches and seizures. My legal team of John Pavlos and Brooks Ames did an extraordinary job in succeeding in getting this case to actually come to trial at all, and in fact to prevail. Our original suit raised the issue of racial profiling and included additional officers and the chain of command, but that was not allowed by the court. However, the jury made itself clear on the principle.” □

DETROIT

School takeover and ‘rightsizing’ of city opposed

By Abayomi Azikiwe,
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Detroit

Spokespersons for corporate Detroit have issued plans to take total control of the public school system as well as “shrink” the city over the next decade. These efforts come amidst the worst economic crisis in Detroit since the Great Depression. The city leads all other major urban centers in joblessness with an official unemployment rate of 28 percent.

A plan to turn over control of the Detroit Public Schools district to Mayor Dave Bing has sparked outrage throughout the city from community organizations, unions and the elected Board of Education. Last year Gov. Jennifer Granholm appointed Robert Bobb “emergency financial manager” to purportedly balance the budget of the beleaguered school district and improve its fiscal operations.

The deficit for DPS, however, has increased by \$100 million since Bobb’s appointment. Nevertheless, he was recently awarded an annual pay raise of \$81,000. Lawsuits have been filed against Bobb by the elected Detroit Board of Education, the Detroit Federation of Teachers and independent groups of teachers and parents.

Bobb has also announced the cancellation of the existing bus contract held by Safeway. The switch to First Student Transportation Co. will leave over 300 bus drivers out of work, many of whom have over 25 years of service with DPS. There is no evidence that the change will save DPS approximately \$50 million as Bobb has alleged.

On March 10-11 several dozen bus drivers and their supporters traveled to the state capital in Lansing to protest Bobb’s actions and demand that their contract be reinstated and that Bobb be fired. The drivers met with a number of African-American

state legislators from Detroit who pledged support. Gov. Granholm, however, refused to see these workers.

Protest actions and public hearings in opposition to these attacks on public education have prompted the backers of privatization to accelerate the process of a takeover of the schools. On March 11, Bobb and several groups announced a sweeping plan to seize control of the district, place it under the ostensible control of corporate-oriented Mayor Bing and hire private management companies to administer its operations.

At a March 11 press conference the school takeover plan was announced by Skillman Foundation CEO Carol Goss, who was flanked by members of other groups including New Detroit Inc., the University Preparatory Academy Charter School and the Detroit Parent Network, which is financed heavily by the Kresge Foundation.

“It’s a sad day,” said Ruby Newbold, president of the Detroit Association of Educational Office Employees. “We are saddened by what is going on in the city of Detroit. How dare you dismantle our school district!”

“This community is not going to take it anymore,” said Newbold, which sparked a standing ovation from the audience.

A demonstration is planned for March 15 to oppose the takeover plans for DPS. The protest will take place outside Renaissance High School, where Bobb will deliver his “state of education” report and seek public support for the plan to eliminate the Detroit School Board and place total control under Mayor Bing and private management firms.

Plans launched to “rightsized” city

Meanwhile, proposals have been



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

announced to restructure the city by razing neighborhoods and commercial districts to create what is touted as a more “efficient” system of municipal governance. In speeches and articles in the corporate dailies and Crain’s Detroit business weekly, corporate interests and foundations are promoting the notion that large sections of the city should be bulldozed, fenced off and sold to the highest bidder.

In a recent interview with WJR radio in Detroit, Bing stated: “If we don’t do it, you know this whole city is going to go down. I’m hopeful people will understand that. If we can incentivize some of those folks that are in those desolate areas, they can get a better situation.”

Bing continued: “You can’t support every neighborhood. You can’t support every community across this city. Those communities that are stable, we can’t allow them to go down the tubes. That’s not a good business decision from my vantage point.” (Detroit News, Feb. 25)

One of the principal architects of this downsizing plan is the suburban Kresge Foundation. “That the city must shrink is beyond debate, said Rip Rapson, president of the Troy-based Kresge Foundation, which has offered to fund the plan. And a land use plan is crucial to developing viable long-term strategies.” (Crain’s Detroit, Jan. 30)

Opposition to these plans is widespread throughout the city. The Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs has called for two major activities in response to the burgeoning crisis. On March 23, the coalition will sponsor a demonstration outside Mayor Bing’s “State of the City” address, where unions, community organizations and other opposition forces will voice their outrage with the administration and its corporate backers.

On March 27, a town hall meeting will be held at Central United Methodist Church downtown in honor of the 75th anniversary of the Works Progress Administration. The WPA put 8 million people back to work during the 1930s at the height of the Great Depression.

According to a Moratorium NOW! leaflet: “Today, with tens of millions of workers — especially youth — unemployed, we need a real, public jobs program, NOW! We can’t wait for some imaginary future jobs from the banks and corporations that have already been bailed out with trillions of our tax dollars. There is plenty that needs doing immediately in Detroit — repairing roads and bridges, cleaning parks, insulating and fixing up thousands of vacant homes so no one is homeless or without heat.” □

On the Picket Line

By Sue Davis

Hotel workers continue fight for contract

A steady downpour on March 12 failed to deter UNITE HERE Local 2 hotel workers and supporters from holding a spirited picket line outside the Westin St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco. The workers, who have been fighting since August for a contract with no cuts in health care benefits, called a boycott of the hotel months ago. A union press release noted: “The Starwood Corporation, which manages this hotel, makes huge profits every year. This hotel alone generated \$17 million in earnings for its ownership in 2009, through the hard work we do.” It continued: “But Starwood is trying to use the current economic crisis to roll back our health care. ... It’s not that Starwood can’t afford to cover our health care; it’s just that they don’t want to.” The picket was called March 12 to shame the World Affairs Council for holding its convention at the Westin. The union declared: “You can’t lead globally if you won’t lead locally.”

Health insurance lobbyists in D.C.

Thousands of union members and health care activists, organized by a joint committee of the two leading labor organizations, surrounded the Ritz-Carlton in Washington, D.C., on March 9 while health insurance lobbyists convened to plot ways to stop the modest health care bill. “Blocking health care reform is a crime!” chanted the activists as a delegation, armed with a warrant to arrest the lobbyists, attempted to enter the hotel. After they were rebuffed, demonstrators covered building entrances with bright yellow tape that read: “It’s a crime to deny our care.” (Union City, online newsletter of the Metro Washington AFL-CIO, March 10)

First labor contract signed under Indigenous law

The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation signed the first labor contract negotiated under Native law with United Auto Workers Local 2121, which represents 2,500 dealers at two casinos in Foxwoods, Conn. An article in the Feb. 10 Indian Country Today noted that this “sets a model for improved labor relations between tribal nations and employees throughout Indian country,”

Defend union staff at NY Historical Society

Workers who run the day-to-day operation of the New York Historical Society, who have been members of United Auto Workers Local 2110 for over 30 years, demonstrated March 3 against unprecedented cutbacks proposed during contract negotiations. Not only does the NYHS want to freeze wages and drastically reduce health and retirement benefits, but it plans to reduce hours for many positions so workers in the library, print room, visitor services, store and mailroom will not be entitled to any benefits. “We do not believe the Society’s position is economically justified,” read the union flyer. “... Thanks to the hard work of all the Society’s employees, its prospects for the future are excellent.” To support the workers, urge NYHS President Louise Mirrer (lmirrer@nyhistory.org; 212-873-3400) to bargain “for a fair contract that recognizes [the workers’] long-term contribution to the Society.”

S.F. Labor Council affirms Haitian sovereignty

The San Francisco Labor Council passed a resolution March 1 urging that the Obama administration make giving vital aid to the Haitian people a priority over military deployment; that aid be distributed by civilian authorities; that the Haitian people coordinate and lead relief efforts and long-term rebuilding of their country; and that the U.S. support the Haitian people’s demand for sovereignty and self-determination. The resolution also called upon the top international financial groups “to secure the immediate cancellation of all of Haiti’s external debt” and requested grants, not debt-incurring loans, to help the country rebuild. In addition, it called for an end to the U.S. banishment of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide “so that he can freely and safely return ... and participate in the rebuilding of his country.” The resolution also asked the AFL-CIO to find ways for union members to be involved in reconstructing Haiti. □

From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

‘A democracy of puppets’

Taken from a March 3 audio commentary. Go to www.millions-4mumia.org for updates and mobilizations on Abu-Jamal’s case.

No matter which way the Iraqi elections turn out, the media bleats about “democracy’s” triumph. Notwithstanding, the lives of average Iraqis will remain an intolerable brew of nastiness and ugliness.

The electricity remains a one-hour-on, 12-hours-off affair.

Water is often undrinkable.

According to a recent BBC report, medical officials now counsel childbearing-age women in Fallujah to not give birth, for fear of horrific birth defects.

That’s because Fallujah’s water was poisoned by the U.S. use of depleted uranium in shells when they virtually leveled the place several

years ago.

Over a million Iraqi refugees have spent seven years in neighboring countries, unable or unwilling to return home.

Iraqis call the U.S. invasion and occupation “al-suqut” (the collapse). It is a time of destruction, desolation, humiliation and loss.

Will an American-style election change this? Hardly.

Who doubts that only U.S. approved puppets will be allowed to run the joint? How can a nation that violated the democratic rights of the American people in order to wage a war built on lies, build a democracy in another country?

It can have elections — but democracy? I don’t think so. □



Fight school closings, teacher layoffs!

Capitalist crisis invades public education

By Fred Goldstein

Capitalism is leaving tens of millions of workers without jobs. It is also abandoning millions of children to flounder in a chaotic education system, buffeted by school closings and teacher firings.

The capitalist government in Washington has sharply escalated its ongoing assault on the public education system. Using the budget crisis as leverage and seizing on the deteriorating quality of schools in impoverished districts, government officials have intensified the campaign for charter-school privatization, school closings, and the firing of teachers and staff across the country.

But the attack is not on all public education. Virtually all the target schools and school districts are in impoverished communities marginalized by capitalism, especially those that are heavily African-American and Latino/a.

The ax falls on Kansas City

The Kansas City, Mo., school board announced on March 10 that it will close 29 of its 61 public schools. About 700 jobs will be cut, including 285 teachers. The targeted school district is majority African-American.

This school district has long been drained by redistricting and the flight to private schools and charter schools. It has been sued for racial discrimination. Its school population has gone from 77,000 to 13,400. The drop in enrollment, caused by poverty and privatization, and the budget crisis are being used as a pretext to further victimize children and their families by these brutal school closings.

The crisis goes beyond Kansas City. On Feb. 23, the school board in Central Falls, R.I., announced that all its 93 teachers, administrators and support staff would be fired. The Central Falls school district is majority Latino/a. Other schools in Rhode Island are also under threat, including in Providence.

On March 4, Boston school officials announced that all the teachers and staff at six public schools would have to reapply for their jobs. These six schools are among 35 on a target list as “underperforming.” The schools on the list face closures, firings and state takeovers.

Cleveland plans 13 school closings. This includes breaking up high schools into “academies,” leaving a big opening for charter schools to move into the vacuum and get public funds.

These examples could be multiplied many times over, from Detroit to Atlanta, Reno, Los Angeles, New York City — virtually across the country.

Rat race to the top

The immediate trigger is the \$4.3 billion Race to the Top fund established by the Obama administration. President Barack Obama publicly praised the drastic firing of all the teachers in the Central Falls high school as an example of progress in education reform.

The Race to the Top is a continuation of the No Child Left Behind program initiated by George W. Bush. Bush promoted charter schools, school vouchers and breaking union contracts — using merit pay and other devices — under the guise of improving teacher performance.

The Race to the Top goes further. It specifies that states can apply for grants if they adopt one of the models specified by the program. These models include



WW PHOTO: LYDIA BAYONETA

Students in Rochester, N.Y., protest during March 4 nationwide actions to fight tuition increases and defend public education.

moving toward charter schools; firing the teaching staff and then allowing them to reapply for their jobs, but not hiring back more than 50 percent of those fired; and closing “underperforming” schools.

This has touched off a rat race among government officials to get grant money by attacking teachers, closing schools, opening up to charter schools, using school vouchers to pay for private schools, and taking other measures to undermine public education and teacher organization.

This reactionary development is an attempt to select out a small percentage of students for exposure to a superior education while leaving the vast majority behind. Those left behind are overwhelmingly children of the poor and the oppressed. This reality is exactly the opposite of what these programs promised.

It is also important to note the motor force for charter schools: handing over the education system to private companies. It is not about these schools’ level of achievement.

To date, the most authoritative study of charter schools was conducted by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University in 2009. The report is the first detailed national assessment of charter schools. It analyzed 70 percent of U.S.-based students attending charter schools and compared the academic progress of those students with that of demographically matched students in nearby public schools. The report found that 17 percent of charter schools reported academic gains that were significantly better than traditional public schools; 46 percent showed no difference from public schools; and 37 percent were significantly worse than their traditional public school counterparts.

The authors of the report considered this a “sobering” finding about the quality of charter schools in the United States. Charter schools showed a significantly greater variation in quality as compared with the more standardized public schools. Many charter schools fell below public school performances and a few exceeded them significantly.

Privatization: ‘The Big Enchilada’

Jonathan Kozol, a well-known authority on public schools and author of the book “Death at an Early Age,” wrote an article entitled “The Big Enchilada” for Harper’s magazine of August 2007. It was about reading a stock market prospectus. Kozol wrote:

“A group of analysts at an investment banking firm known as Montgomery Securities described the financial benefits to be derived from privatizing our public schools. ‘The education industry,’ according to these analysts, ‘represents, in our opinion, the final frontier of a number of sectors once under public control’ that ‘have either voluntarily opened’ or, they note in pointed terms, have ‘been forced’ to open up to private enterprise. Indeed, they write, ‘the education industry represents the largest market opportunity’ since health care services were privatized during the 1970s.

“Referring to private education companies as ‘EMOs’ (Education Management Organizations), they note that college education also offers some ‘attractive investment returns’ for corporations, but then come back to what they see as the much greater profits to be gained by moving into public elementary and secondary schools. ‘The larger developing opportunity is in the K-12 EMO market, led by private elementary school providers,’ which, they emphasize, ‘are well positioned to exploit potential political reforms such as school vouchers.’ From the point of view of private profit, one of these analysts enthusiastically observes, ‘the K-12 market is the Big Enchilada.’” (See FIST statement, “Defend Education from ‘Disaster Capitalism,’” in the Workers World of March 4.)

These two items speak volumes about the Race to the Top program. It is an attempt to put a big part of the public school system on a corporate model of cutthroat competition. The funds for the education of poor children are the object of this competition.

This model has public school officials marketing their schools to the commu-

nity to fend off the competition of charter schools. New York’s Harlem is a prime target of charter schools and has put the public schools under enormous pressure.

For example, “River East Elementary on East 120th Street draws students throughout Harlem and typically has more applicants than seats. But at this time of year, staff members spend hours scurrying to day care centers, churches and apartment complexes to find prospective parents, said Katie Smith, the assistant principal. ‘We have to be out there constantly representing ourselves,’ Ms. Smith said.” (New York Times, March 10)

The net result is that the capitalist establishment is using the economic crisis to accomplish three things: to wring profits out of the public education system; to solve its budget crisis on the backs of the people by closing schools; and to open up an anti-union campaign against the teachers by driving them into non-union charter schools and weakening the contracts of those who remain in the public system.

This crisis demonstrates many things about the capitalist system at its present stage of crisis, when the opportunity for profitable investment in the real economy of production is narrowed by the crisis of overproduction and the saturation of markets.

It shows that the vultures of finance capital will find every avenue possible to raid the public treasury in pursuit of profit, including forcing a crisis on the education system.

This hurts students, parents, teachers and communities. This is the basis on which to unite against this plan of divide and conquer. It calls for a united mobilization to defend public education and make the bankers and bosses pay for a quality education for all.

This is the richest country in the world, with a \$14 trillion economy. There are hundreds of billions available for the schools. But these funds are being pocketed by the banks, the Pentagon, the corporations. There is enough money to give everyone a quality education. □

DETROIT 1937

Immigrant women beat cigar company bosses

By Martha Grevatt

When you think of the 1930s, one of the first things that come to mind is the great struggle of the United Auto Workers to organize Detroit's biggest employers. In fact there were numerous sit-down strikes outside the auto industry. Courageous women led many, including a cigar-makers sit-down strike that lasted over two months.

In 1937 six cigar factories occupied a four-square-mile area bordered by Milwaukee, Grandy, St. Aubin and Warren Avenue. In these factories 4,000 women, mostly Polish-speaking, toiled all day long.

Their wages, having been cut 35 to 50 percent since the 1929 stock market crash, were among the lowest in all of Detroit. Toxic tobacco dust was always in the air, with ventilation poor to nonexistent. The few available toilets were of a primitive type or, if modern, dirty and often broken. The factory owners provided no soap or hot water. Sexual harassment from foremen was routine.

A Citizen's Fact Finding Committee concluded that the workers in the cigar factories "have to work with terrific speed which affects them physically and mentally. They become highly nervous and irritable and at night they are so physically exhausted that a matter of recreation is prohibited." (Wayne State University, Walter P. Reuther Library, Dorothy Kraus Collection, Box 1, Folder 6)

Inspired by the auto plant sit-down strikes in Detroit and Flint, these women were ready to fight back.

On Feb. 16, five days after the occupa-

tion of General Motors plants in Flint won union recognition for the UAW, workers at the Websten-Eisenlohr cigar factory sat down. They had put a notice on the bulletin board in Polish telling the women to stay in. They'd asked management for a 10-percent raise but got no reply.

They stopped production. But now they had a new problem. They had no union.

The conservative, craft-based American Federation of Labor had a Cigar Workers Union — but had ignored the women's repeated pleas for help. Instead the workers sent a delegation to UAW headquarters to demand that Polish-born Stanley Nowak, head of the Polish Trade Union Committee, be their organizer.

They knew Nowak from his weekly Polish radio program and his frequent appearances at Dom Polski (Polish Home), both of which he used to promote unionism. The delegation sat down in the union office until Nowak agreed to help them unionize the cigar industry.

Within six hours the women had formed an organization. There were committees for drawing up demands, providing food, bedding and child care, and establishing a strike headquarters.

In a matter of days the five other cigar companies — Mazer-Cressman, Essex Cigar, Bernard Schwartz, Tegge-Jackson and General Cigar — were also occupied.

On the evening of Feb. 19 the strikers held a mass meeting at Dom Polski, which ended with a huge march that passed by all six factories.

The women garnered widespread sup-

port from the UAW and other Detroit-area unions, as well as local businesses that provided bread, sausage and other food items.

The spouses, fathers, brothers and adult sons found themselves taking on tasks that traditionally fall on women during a strike: child care, housework, staffing the strike kitchen, winning over hostile spouses and maintaining support outside the plants.

One striker described the joy of empowerment, writing: "Some of us sitting here are doing fancy knitting work. Others are playing cards. A few are in the 'kitchen' making noodles. There is music and the younger girls, with gay cellophane ribbons in their hair, are dancing. We've got to pass the time away, because, like one worker said, 'We're gonna stick it out until past Easter, if necessary.' The auto victory showed us how.

"It all sounds like a lark, doesn't it? But we are serious, dead serious." ("Women and the Labor Movement: From the First Trade Unions to the Present," Philip S. Foner)

On March 4 management at Mazer-Cressman agreed to the women's demands. On March 5 Essex also settled.

On March 20, however, with the other four plants still occupied, Detroit's Mayor Frank Couzens ordered a brutal crackdown. Police broke down the doors at Bernard Schwartz. They grabbed women by the arms, twisting them, and nearly pulled off their hair and clothing as they dragged the heroic strikers — now

a month into their occupation — to the streets.

Sympathetic bystanders were also assaulted. A pregnant woman was thrown off her porch.

Labor's outrage was immediate. UAW President Homer Martin threatened "a general strike in the automobile industry ... unless the brutal eviction of sit-down strikers and the ruthless clubbing of workers by Detroit Police is stopped." ("Two Who Were There, A Biography of Stanley Nowak," Margaret Collingsworth Nowak)

At a rally of 200,000 people on March 24 in Cadillac Square, the UAW's Victor Reuther threatened a two-for-one: two new sit-downs for every one eviction.

On April 1 a delegation of strikers met with Michigan Gov. Frank Murphy. The governor promised to look into their situation — but not until a sit-down at Chrysler was settled.

That happened on April 7 and finally on April 22, more than two months into the strike, representatives from management met with the cigar strikers in Murphy's office. By the end of the day an agreement was signed.

On April 23 the strike's end was announced. By May 17 the cigar makers finally had a union of their own: the newly formed Cigar Workers Union Local 24 affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

These brave women, whose first language was not English, were among the millions who played a critical role in building the CIO. □

MELISSA ROXAS

An example of women's power

By Teresa Gutierrez

A long-standing tactic that oppressors use to stop the struggle for liberation is repression. It mainly backfires on them. As the age-old but accurate slogan declares, "Repression breeds resistance."

This is exactly how to describe the case of Melissa Roxas.

Roxas is a Filipina activist living in the U.S. who organizes solidarity for the people of the Philippines. On a fact-finding trip to the Philippines last year, she was detained by the military, held for six days and tortured.

Her case is proof that people will resist oppression no matter what. But it is also an expression of the intense fierceness that women warriors display every day of their lives. It is a fierceness that is so often hidden or disparaged, but it is there.

When you first meet Melissa, she comes across as a shy and quiet person. Then you hear her story and realize the depth of her incredible strength. She is one of countless women from around the world whose courage is so profound that the South African adage "You have touched a woman, you have struck a rock, you will be crushed" truly comes to life.

Last May 25 Roxas was abducted at gunpoint in Quezon City, Philippines. She was held for six days and was brutally tortured. Melissa was in the country conducting community surveys in preparation for a volunteer medical mission in a rural town.

The U.S.-backed Philippine government was trying to quiet her. But Melissa courageously continues to organize not

only in behalf of her people but in denouncing what happened to her.

At a Jan. 30 public meeting on the Philippines in New York City, Melissa brought the audience to tears with her remarks. She told the crowd, "It is often hard, even now, to talk about my experience. But the reason why I tell my story is because it is also the story of many others. Not all of them have surfaced, not all of them have survived, and those who did have been afforded very few opportunities to speak about what happened to them.

"It is hard for survivors to speak out," she says, "because most are still harassed by the military and police and threatened. Because of this, many incidents of torture have not been officially reported. Torture survivors, like myself, also find it very hard because every time I talk about the experience it is like reliving it again. Even the mere mention of torture brings back memories."

She continues in a low but stirring voice, "But because many more have been silenced and because the main objective of torture is to silence and to debilitate people, it is important to speak out. I also know that very few people in the U.S. know how grave the human rights situation is in the Philippines."

Melissa points out that the main culprit is the U.S.-backed 7th Infantry Division of the Armed Forces.

In 2009 the Philippine Supreme Court granted a writ of protection to Roxas and authenticated her claim of abduction and torture.

Unfortunately, the same court ruling denied the request for an investigation

of Fort Magsaysay, the alleged camp where Roxas was detained.

People's lawyer Leonard Weinglass has joined Roxas' legal team which is helping her pursue justice in international courts and filing complaints with the U.S. State Department as well as the United Nations.

In a long-standing policy, the U.S. government has not condemned the human rights abuses in the Philippines. On the contrary, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited the country recently and expressed U.S. support for the highly repressive Philippine government and military.

As Weinglass stated in the same meeting, the only solution to bringing justice in the case of Melissa Roxas and all the people of the Philippines is to organize. The New York Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines has an ongoing campaign for justice. To find out how you can help, email nychrp@gmail.com.

On the anniversary of International Working Women Day, Melissa's words inspire us to resist. She says, "The Philippine military wanted to keep the blindfolds on me. And even months after my ordeal, I still bear the physical marks of that torture. Every time I see those marks on my body, I am reminded of what happened in that dark corner of the world that I had known during those six days in May where dying came so slowly. I will probably have to live my life with those memories, but I refuse to be intimidated. I refuse to be silenced." *Read her entire talk at www.workers.org.*



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Another double standard in Black and white

As soon as I saw the WW editorial about the "Double standards in Black and white," I immediately thought of Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger. For the second time in less than two years, a woman has courageously come forward to report a sexual assault by this white quarterback. He has yet to be charged in either case. In fact, his lawyer team has now engaged a private investigator to probably dig up dirt on the woman. This sounds similar to the 2006 rape case of members of the Duke lacrosse team where the character of the victim, an African-American

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY OBSERVED WORLDWIDE

By Kathy Durkin

The centennial anniversary of International Women's Day was commemorated throughout the world by marches, rallies and meetings. Though themes differed, the activities showed women expressing their rights, protesting injustices and demonstrating solidarity with their sisters in struggle.

Women's voices could be heard from Uruguay to Haiti, from Bangladesh to the Philippines. Some of the highlights of the many global activities on IWD — March 8 — are summarized here.



BANGLADESH
Garment workers in Dhaka.



PHILIPPINES Protesters carry photos of Morong political prisoners.

Women of Haiti marched in Port-au-Prince with banners held high, asserting “Women will rebuild Haiti,” referring to the devastating earthquake on Jan. 12, which took hundreds of thousands of lives and homes.

Many women's organizations in Puerto Rico and Latin America dedicated their IWD programs to the women of Haiti, especially paying homage to women community leaders who had perished in the earthquake.

Activities in Europe varied, but the global economic crisis was not forgotten. In Athens, Greece, women protested against government austerity programs, which are affecting workers and retirees.

In Spain and Portugal women asserted demands for reproductive rights, similar to many protests in Latin America, to counter the stronghold of the Catholic Church on their governments' policies.

In Istanbul, Turkey, women proudly marched. In Calcutta, India, women called for political rights and representation.

The women of Gaza marched with their children, showing their strength and determination in the face of Israeli aggression and occupation, one year after its horrific bombing campaign.

Their Palestinian sisters held a sit-in and rally in Beirut, Lebanon, demanding the release of their sisters who are tortured and imprisoned in Israeli jails. Their signs hailed struggling women everywhere.

To celebrate IWD, the National Garment Workers Federation sponsored a rally of women garment workers in Dhaka, Bangladesh. They demanded their right to a safe workplace. Women, who form 80 percent of the clothing factory workforce, face sexual abuse, long hours, low pay and unsafe working conditions.

A contingent of hearing- and speech-impaired women joined the IWD march

in Kathmandu, Nepal. They carried signs calling for “equal rights and opportunities.”

Women workers in Seoul, South Korea, marched to protest the anti-worker policies of President Lee Myung-bak.

Philippine women marched throughout their country to protest growing poverty and political repres-



NEPAL
Disabled women's contingent in Kathmandu.



BEIRUT, LEBANON
Palestinian women

sion at the hands of the U.S.-backed government of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Marchers called for justice for women victims of human rights violations. Many women demanded “Free the Morong 43.” These 43 health care workers, of which 26 are women, are being illegally imprisoned at Camp Capinpin, an army headquarters in Tanay, Rizal.

In Baguio City, demonstrators honored the heroic struggles of Indigenous and working women in Cordilleras, while in

Calamba City, they marked women's long struggle for equality and justice.

On IWD, the government of South Africa announced it was setting up more health care programs for women and children.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions celebrated the gains of women workers and called on unions to promote women's role in collective bargaining and gender equality in the workplace.

In Latin America, the progressive governments of Bolivia and Venezuela have implemented pro-women policies. On IWD, the Bolivian government announced the creation of a commission to promote women's equality.

Nilda Copa, the minister of justice, told of Bolivia's new constitution which contains 34 articles promoting women's rights, a codification of women's equality and prohibition of all forms of discrimination.

More than 200,000 women from all over Venezuela marched together in Cara-

cas to celebrate the gains in women's equality that have been made through the Bolivarian Revolution. Women now lead four of the five branches of government, while social programs have been implemented to help poor women. A Bicentennial Women's Front was launched on IWD to help build socialism there.

Socialist Cuba celebrated IWD's centennial with national celebrations and tributes to Vilma Espin, founder of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), and revolutionary hero Celia Sanchez.

The Cubans' celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the FMC began on IWD and will continue through August. This 4-million member organization has been the leading force in helping women gain political, social and economic equality. □



VENEZUELA

WASHINGTON, D.C.

A salute to Cuban, Haitian women

By Cheryl LaBash
Washington

International Women's Day is a holiday in revolutionary Cuba. At the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C., on March 8, a reception saluted the accomplishments of Cuban women through the 51 years of socialist construction and the women of Haiti struggling for reconstruction and independence. Just returned from three weeks working in the Cuban medical brigades in Haiti, two young African-American women doctors trained at the Cuban Latin American School of Medicine spoke briefly and joined the celebration.

A PowerPoint presentation depicted the various roles of Cuban women from the military to the arts and especially honored the late Vilma Espín, the revolutionary leader who also founded the Federation of Cuban Women. A special section recognized the mothers, sisters, spouses and



Cuban billboard honors the late Vilma Espín.

daughters of the Cuban Five. The five men have been unjustly held in U.S. prisons since 1998, nearly twelve years, for preventing U.S.-based terror attacks on Cuba.

A solidarity message from the International Committee for Freedom for the Cuban 5 called on all to help Olga Salanueva and Adriana Pérez overcome the U.S. denial of visas preventing them visiting their respective spouses, René González and Gerardo Hernández, who is still serving a double life term.

The Federation of Cuban Women, a mass organization formed Aug. 23, 1960, involves more than 4 million women today. Despite the global economic crisis that has depressed prices of Cuba's exports and increased costs for its imports, unemployment for women is only 2.0 percent. According to an FMC brochure, Cuban Women in Figures 2010, in 2009 infant mortality was a low 4.8 per thousand live births. The family doctor and nurse program covers 99.1 percent of the population. Women comprise 43.32 percent of the Cuban parliament and 40 percent of the council of state, with a woman vice president. Women are the majority of lawyers and judges and nearly half of the Cuban Supreme Court.

The celebration was hosted by the first secretary of the Cuban Interests Section, Patricia Pego, and Cuban Interests Section head, Jorge Bolaños Suárez. □

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woman, was put on trial and the prosecutor was fired for daring to charge the sons of privileged white people with rape and sexual assault. Charges were eventually dropped against the players.

A word to the bourgeoisie: The fury and desperation of our class is growing with each cutback and injustice, and when the tipping point comes, it's not going to be pretty.

Susan Schnur
Cleveland

Letters to the editor can be sent to wwp@workers.org or mailed to: Workers World Editor, 55 W. 17 St., #5C, New York, NY 10011

WIDF assesses global conditions of women workers

By Sue Davis
New York

The Women's International Democratic Federation held a panel discussion on "The Economic Crisis and Women's Access to Work" at the United Nations on March 10 as part of the 15th anniversary of the Beijing World Conference on Women. Dr. Vinie Burrows, permanent representative to the U.N. for the WIDF, asked the panelists to talk about "how the global economic crisis has fallen the hardest on women." Berta Joubert-Ceci of the National Women's Fightback Network of WIDF helped organize the event.

Ana Violeta Castaneda, WIDF regional coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean, noted that advancements for women have been limited since Beijing because many repressive governments in the region spend valuable resources on the military, while the vast majority of the people live in poverty.

Valerie Francisco, representing GABRIELA USA, said that employment for women in the Philippines has worsened since the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo administration took power nine years ago. As a re-

sult, Filipino women are migrant workers in 145 countries, most often as low-paid domestic servants with no rights. She invited women to attend a GABRIELA conference in August in Montreal to prepare a women's platform of action.

Liege Rocha, a member of the steering committee of WIDF in Brazil, reported that the impact of the capitalist crisis was not that heavy in Brazil, though there was some increase in unemployment. While 47 percent of women work (90 percent in service industries), they earn 30 percent less than men. "One of our achievements is establishing the Women's Department, where women decide on policies for women. We need to take action to end women's inequality and to be economically independent," she said.

Pham Hoai Giang, the head of international relations for the Vietnam Women's Union, prepared a statement read by U.S. activist Merle Ratner. The VWU, established in 1930, is currently fighting trafficking of women and domestic violence and is dealing with the continuing effects of Agent Orange. Giang noted that the impact of the capitalist crisis has not been as severe as in other countries because of



Maritzel González-Quevido holds picture of Cuban Five political prisoners at discussion of women's status at UN.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

government policies devoted to relieving poverty.

Maritzel González-Quevido of the Federation of Cuban Women spoke about how Cuba has been actively implementing key policies adopted at the Beijing conference as part of its overall program to end oppression based on class, gender and race. González reported that women

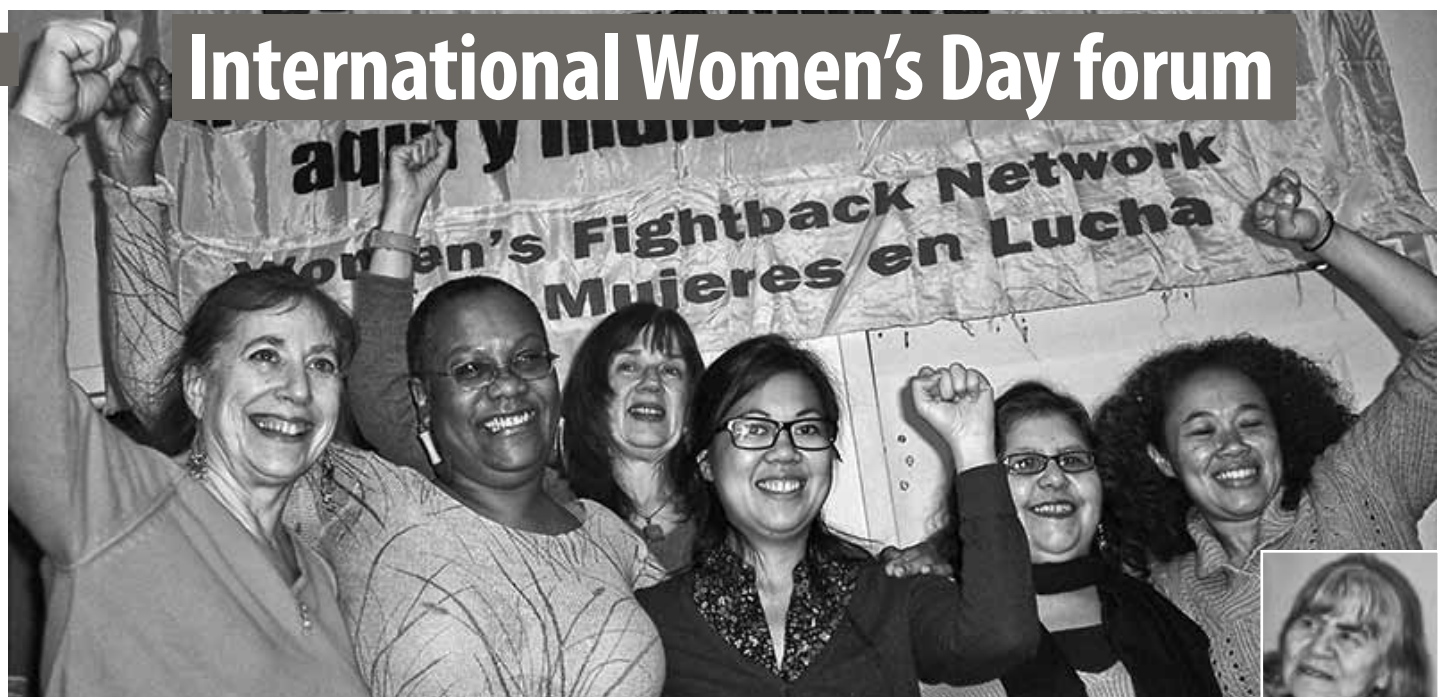
predominate in many job categories — for example, they are 70 percent of health care workers and attorneys.

Invited guest Tiago Vieira, president of the World Federation of Democratic Youth, announced the World Youth Festival that his organization is holding in December 2010 in Johannesburg, South Africa. □

NEW YORK CITY

The New York City branch of Workers World Party held a forum on "Women, the global capitalist crisis and the growing fightback" March 13 at the Solidarity Center. The forum commemorated the centennial of International Women's Day recognized on March 8. Speakers covered a range of developments that socially impact women of all nationalities, ages and gender expressions, such as sexual exploitation, unemployment, budget cuts, war, occupation and racism. Building solidarity and the need for socialism were common themes for a number of the talks. Hear the podcasts of the presentations at www.workers.org.

— Monica Moorehead



WW PHOTOS: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Speakers Gavrielle Gemma, Monica Moorehead, Joyce Chediak, Bernadette Ellorin, Teresa Gutierrez, LeiLani Dowell, Joyce Kanowitz.

'Concern' masks wars for empire

U.S. wars in Afghanistan, Iraq hit women the hardest

By Joyce Chediak

One-fifth of the world's population is so poor that it does not have basic necessities such as shelter and food. Three-quarters of the poor are women and their numbers at the bottom are increasing. Why is this so?

Today, poverty is not based upon a scarcity of resources. Technology has made it possible for people to work only a few hours a day to sustain themselves and have their needs met. Poverty is the result of the grossly unequal distribution of wealth and of the globalization of the capitalist system that denies deserved economic benefits to whole populations in the developing world and growing numbers in the developed countries.

Capitalism's neo-liberal policies speed up the pauperization of women. The worldwide economic crisis, precipitated by greedy Wall Street bankers, has only made matters worse.

For example, in Latin America the imposition of the North American Free Trade Agreement has resulted in fewer social services, higher prices, depression

of wages and benefits, and increased unemployment. In Argentina 23 percent of women now work as servants. In Lima, Peru, more than 11 percent are domestics. Many work part-time, without contracts or benefits.

Meanwhile, Washington claims it is a savior and advocate for women around the world. For instance, Washington claimed that a big reason for the Pentagon invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq was to help the women there. What have years of U.S. war really brought to women in these countries?

Suraya Pakzad, an Afghani women's advocate, described a desperate situation for women in her country. She said, "Three decades of war, displacement, warlordism, gun trafficking and narcotics trafficking come together and create a really hard situation for women when there's no security and continuation of war, there's no guarantee for women's rights."

In describing a country dealing with increasing poverty, a recent rise in violence against women and mounting civilian casualties, Pakzad said that "when people

are sick, starving and don't have access to clean water, advocating for education — and even women's rights — isn't productive The priority is health clinics, access to safe water and food." (Politics Daily, March 10, 2010)

Women in Iraq demand "the right to live"

Before the Pentagon first attacked Iraq in 1991 that country had some of the best conditions in the region for women, including a high level of education, health, nutrition and social services. According to Iraqi women advocates, the conditions of life have since deteriorated to the level of the very poorest countries in the world.

They say that they lived much better under Saddam Hussein, and that their plight has deteriorated year by year since the U.S.-led invasion of 2003. Now they are not just demanding equal rights but "the right to live."

"Before the 2003 invasion, it was possible for a women to live a normal life as long as you followed state policy," said Sharmeran Marugi, head of the Iraqi Women's Committee. Now, however, "the right to live" is a slogan that we have

begun using because a woman's life in Iraq is being threatened on all sides." (Agence France Presse, April 17, 2008)

This is how U.S. capitalism and imperialism have "helped" women. The U.S. government cynically used the plight of women and the good will and concern of people in the U.S. as an excuse to wage wars of conquest against Afghanistan and Iraq and to steal their natural resources.

In truth, a foreign invader and occupier can never bring freedom to women.

While women's oppression comes from many sources, U.S. capitalism — its imperialist and neo-liberal policies and wars against whole populations — is today the greatest oppressor of women in the world, far outweighing every other source.

Part 2: Washington's "concern" for women in Somalia, Iran, Palestine and Nigeria as an excuse for intervention; a Marxist view of women's liberation examines gender, class, national oppression; how to build international solidarity.

Based on a talk given at a March 13 NYC International Women's Day forum.

Forget Biden's 'dignity' — What about the Palestinians?

By Deirdre Griswold

A lot of noise is being made over what happened recently in Israel when U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden went there to meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

During Biden's visit, which was supposed to promote the "peace process" and lead to a renewal of discussions between the Palestinian Authority and the Tel Aviv regime, the Interior Ministry announced that Israel was going ahead with building 1,600 new housing units for Zionists in East Jerusalem.

This was a slap in the face to the Palestinian people, who have had their lands systematically taken away by the settler regime ever since the founding of Israel in 1948. It was especially raw because Israel had agreed to suspend the settlements in the interest of dialogue with the Palestinian Authority.

The brouhaha in the imperialist media, however, is not over what Israel is doing to the Palestinians. It is over the affront to Biden's dignity.

The right-wing media that openly champion Israel's role as a U.S.-armed and -financed pit bull in the Middle East are telling the Obama administration to get over it. Despite the long anti-Semitic history of the far right in the U.S., they have for now embraced Israel as a great champion of "democracy" and a weapon against the struggling Arab and

Muslim countries fighting neocolonial domination.

Of course, the democracy they mean leaves the majority of humankind chained to the imperialist countries that have robbed their rich resources and people for centuries.

The right wing also, bolder and bolder each day, attack the Obama administration as "soft on terrorism" and secretly allied with "enemies of the United States."

The voices in the corporate media who answer this kind of nonsense hinge their arguments on what is the more effective way to achieve U.S. objectives in the Middle East — meaning imperialist objectives. For example, Thomas L. Friedman of the New York Times says the announcement about building more settlements showed "how out of touch the Israeli religious right is with America's strategic needs." (March 13)

Some take up the question: Should Israel be unleashed to bomb Iran? No, they argue, because that would make it even harder for the U.S. to control the area.

They argue that breaking up the "peace process" would undermine the work Washington has done to promote conciliatory elements in the Palestinian Authority and make it more likely that Mahmoud Abbas and his party will be replaced by the more militant Hamas grouping.

That is what the whole debate in the imperialist media is about. There is not a word of respect for the Palestinians

or recognition of their right to get their country back.

What is the 'peace process'?

Since the Annapolis Conference in November 2007, the U.S. government has said it is committed to promoting a settlement in the Israel-Palestine conflict that would allow for a very small and fragmented Palestinian state — the so-called "two-state" solution. Beginning much earlier — in the 1970s — Washington positioned itself as the leader of a world effort to bring about a "peace process" in the Middle East. This process has been going on for some 35 years — with nothing to show for it.

Over this same period, the state of Israel has been militarily attacking Palestinians and other Arab peoples inside and outside its borders, expanding the territory under its control and creating unbearable conditions for the Palestinians living in Israel — like extending the "apartheid wall," a serpentine barrier that cuts Palestinian villages in half and makes it impossible for the people to move freely, whether to work, school, shopping or medical facilities.

The Palestinian people, however, instead of letting themselves be driven out of their homeland by these outrageous conditions, have resisted heroically for generations. Their cause is deeply felt throughout the Middle East, not just because of ethnicity and religion but be-

cause the peoples there share a history of oppression.

This all has happened while the U.S. was bankrolling Israel and helping create its formidable military. All the world's leading military authorities agree this includes a secret Israeli nuclear arsenal.

So why is Washington making such a huge deal out of Iran acquiring nuclear technology, when they say not a word about Israel's bombs? Because Israel is an ally of Washington and Wall Street, while Iran in 1979 had a revolution to get out of the clutches of Shah Reza Pahlavi. The people rose up because the shah had brutally suppressed them and kept them in poverty, while allowing Western oil companies to walk away with billions in profits.

Since that revolution, the proceeds from oil sales have paid for impressive gains in the Iranian standard of living. All indices of progress, including literacy, life expectancy and lowered infant mortality, as well as vast improvement in the educational level of women, show how important the revolution was for the Iranian people.

The Palestinian people, too, need self-determination to be free to develop their great potential. It will come not from the maneuvers of either imperialist party in the United States but from the continued struggle of the people, aided by progressive humanity all over the world.

E-mail: dgriswold@workers.org

NEW YORK

Women doctors return from service in Haiti

By Dolores Cox
New York

On March 2, seven U.S. doctors gave a report on their month-long mission of providing post-earthquake medical services in Haiti at a program at Judson Memorial Church in New York City.

The Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO)/Pastors for Peace sponsored the event. IFCO also sent staff to Haiti to provide supportive services and worked with a grassroots coalition of 180 Haitian and Dominican youth.

IFCO is a 43-year-old non-profit agency working for racial, social and economic justice. It administers a scholarship program for medical students who receive training in Cuba at the Latin American School of Medicine in Havana. The school was founded 10 years ago to help countries affected by hurricanes and other disasters. The U.S. doctors — medical school graduates trained in Cuba — were part of Cuba's Henry Reeve Brigade, which, in the aftermath of the 2005 Hurricane Katrina disaster in the U.S., offered to send 100 doctors. The U.S. government refused their help.

Presently, the LASM provides medical training to students from 49 different countries, including the U.S. Cuba is aware that in a rich country like the U.S. there are students living in poverty who cannot afford medical training, IFCO said. Immediately after the earthquake, Cuba set up five emergency hospitals in Haiti and had already been training Haitian medical students in disaster response.

The seven doctors are all young Black women, one of whom is Haitian-American. Five of them are from NYC, the

other two from Houston, Texas and Oakland, Calif. They reported that Cuba trains doctors in community medicine, preventive and primary care services, disaster response and work within a public health care system. They were taught to be resourceful and creative when modern medical equipment is not available.

The doctors traveled to Haiti via the Dominican Republic. They showed photos and told of their long around-the-clock shifts working six days a week in a field hospital under a tent, without running water. On their first day, they said, approximately 2,000 people passed through the hospital. The temperature rose to 100 degrees. They treated patients both indoors and outdoors along with Cuban-trained doctors from other Latin American countries. Medical teams also consisted of pediatricians, surgeons, rehab specialists, psychiatrists and social workers, who worked alongside Haitian doctors and professionals.

In Croix des Boquets the doctors slept on the ground in small tents. They treated thousands of patients, many of whom had never before seen a doctor. Each doctor provided care to at least 100 patients a day. Patients were both earthquake victims and those who had chronic, pre-existing medical problems. Common among these were typhoid, infectious diarrhea, malaria and malnutrition.

They found babies dying from fractured skulls, infection and dehydration. In addition, they each delivered approximately six babies a day. The doctors expressed concern for the psychological trauma of the children, because they are Haiti's future. Part of the work with children consisted of having Haitian children write

their stories in Creole. Their writings were then sent to Cuba, translated into Spanish and shared with Cuban children.

The doctors spoke about the pain and suffering, courage, resilience and graciousness of the Haitian people. They added that the Haitians' trauma will be long lasting. Currently, the doctors are concerned about the increase in infectious diseases that the rainy season is bringing due to poor sanitation, sewage and lack of shelter.

In total, the doctors saw about 20,000 patients and performed 188 major surgeries. They spoke of how they were all trained to be committed to serve the human race, regardless of color or ethnicity. They added that everyone must be humane enough to collectively help each other and give love, energy, solidarity and dedication to the cause of humanity.

Each doctor emotionally concluded their report by saying how personally affected they were witnessing the disaster's

aftermath. The catastrophe was a watershed moment for them, and that despite the language gap, they communicated through touches, smiles and tears. When they became overwhelmed they gave support and strength to each other.

The Haitian-American doctor said she felt privileged to be able to help her people, but went there very afraid of what she would see. She was able to connect with her family but also lost several family members in the earthquake. She asked that people please not forget Haiti.

The Rev. Lucius Walker, IFCO's executive director, ended the program by announcing that later this month IFCO, Local 100 of the Transit Workers Union and Riverside Church will join in sending a 40-foot container by boat to Haiti with medical equipment and supplies. Donations can be sent to IFCO, 418 W. 145th St., NY 10031, memo: Haiti Medical Service Project. Following the program, dinner was served by Haitian-American women. □



Pat Chin in Haiti.

WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

REPARATIONS, MARXISM and the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper dedicated to the memory of Jamaican-born leader of Workers World Party

PAT CHIN
Includes her article
Haiti Needs Reparations, Not Sanctions,
July 2003
www.Leftbooks.com

What will it take to end the wars?

Continued from page 1

soldiers and National Guard, still has 98,000 troops in Iraq, plus an equal number of mercenaries; why this administration has escalated the war in Afghanistan, is attacking Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, and shows no sign of pulling back from the area.

The class character of these wars also explains why the war makers are vulnerable.

The system that spawned the wars is bringing unemployment and extreme poverty to tens of millions inside the United States itself. The wars grow increasingly unpopular as the public treasury is looted to pay for them. Workers' taxes provide not only the hundreds of billions for current wars but billions in interest on the debt incurred by past wars. Every public service is being cut back — but not the military or the interest payments to the banks. While the military-financial-industrial complex wallows in cost-plus contracts, returning veterans run into a wall of unemployment and foreclosures, not the welcoming jobs they had hoped for.

Something has to give. So much long-term misery for the working class cannot be contained within the present social fabric.

That's why the class orientation of the anti-war movement is so important. Struggles are breaking out all over for jobs, decent wages, pensions, health care, to stop foreclosures and evictions, budget cuts and layoffs. These struggles can only grow as the economic crisis becomes ever more intractable.

In these pages we have written for several months about the importance of the anti-war demonstrations on March 20 and encouraged our readers to be there. At the same time, Workers World has helped to build the national actions

to save education that brought out hundreds of thousands on March 4 and the upcoming May Day demonstrations that will unite elements of the labor movement with the immigrant community.

In unity, there is strength. Uniting the struggles of the workers and the oppressed communities with the struggle against imperialist war is the only way to defeat the war makers. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. knew that. So did Malcolm X, Huey Newton and Muhammad Ali.

The turning point in the Vietnam War came when the communities of color in the U.S. refused to be used as cannon fodder any longer and recognized the Vietnamese not as their enemies but as people oppressed by the same slave masters. That's when U.S. soldiers began refusing to go to battle against them.

Inherent in the economic crisis of today is the possibility that the working class as a whole — Black, Latino/a, Native, Arab and white — will actively turn against these wars, not just at the ballot box but in the streets, as the cost of unbridled militarism becomes unbearable.

But it can't happen without leadership. The number one task of anti-war activists is to help build the bridges that can bring about such unity.

The demands of the workers and the oppressed for jobs, schools, union wages and an end to racism, sexism and homophobia must also be the demands of the anti-war movement, because they challenge the exploiting class of profiteers that is addicted to war. The struggle against the "chain of command" in the factory or the office is also a challenge to the military chain of command that allows officers to order young workers to kill or die on the battlefield in the interests of the boss class.

Disruption of this deadly status quo is the task of all who want peace and social justice. □

MUNDO OBRERO

Inmigrantes merecen legalización

Continúa de página 12

fácticos, a pesar de las buenas intenciones de muchos individuos.

Mientras cientos de miles marchan en Washington el 21 de marzo, debían tener esto en mente. Debemos estar atentos/as en los días siguientes, de que ni Schumer ni Gutiérrez utilicen el impulso de la manifestación para apoyar sus proyectos de ley. Esto sería oportunista y una interpretación errónea de los/as manifestantes que se sacrificaron para venir a Washington.

No nos equivoquemos al respecto: las masas en Washington el 21 de marzo quieren la legalización.

Una forma de asegurar que la demanda de legalización prevalezca, es la convocatoria y fortalecimiento de las movilizaciones del Primero de Mayo 2010 por todo el país.

El Primero de Mayo es una señal para la clase dominante que estamos marchando independientes de los partidos de las

grandes empresas. El Primero de Mayo es un día en que los/as trabajadores/as de todo el mundo marchan. Es un día histórico que se llena con el espíritu de la lucha de clases.

El Primero de Mayo de este año se espera que sea único. En muchas partes del país, está atrayendo no sólo a los/as inmigrantes, o a los/as activistas por los derechos inmigratorios. Está atrayendo más y más a estudiantes, sindicatos, organizaciones de las personas sin hogar, jóvenes, organizaciones anti-guerra y organizaciones que luchan por puestos de trabajo o en contra de las ejecuciones hipotecarias.

Si estamos unidos/as y militantes, este es el tipo de movilización que puede arrebatar lo que es nuestro, incluyendo la legalización.

La autora es co-coordinadora de la Coalición 1º de Mayo de Nueva York por los Derechos de los/as Inmigrantes.

‘Disappearing Voices’

The struggle to save Black radio

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

A spirited program addressing the tactics used by corporate media to undermine Black radio was held in Philadelphia March 9. It was attended by activists already involved in efforts to stem this tide and others concerned over how to keep peoples' news and culture alive and thriving.

The program, hosted by the Philadelphia International Action Center and the Prometheus Radio Project, featured Iyanna "Nana Soul" Jones and U-Savior Washington from Black Wxxx Multimedia. It was also the Philadelphia premier of an exciting documentary produced in 2008 by Washington entitled, "Disappearing Voices: The Decline of Black Radio."

Following the movie screening, Jones and Washington were joined on a panel by Cody Anderson, station manager of WURD and former owner of WHAT radio; Andalusia Knoll from the Prometheus Radio Project; Berta Joubert-Ceci of the People's Video Network; and Jasper Jones with West Philadelphia community radio WPEB. Anderson and Jones both appear in the film.

"Disappearing Voices" makes the point that those who control radio and other media can control what people think and what culture they want. In the Black community, radio is very important. The lack of access to this medium impacts struggles against racism, police brutality and other forms of injustice, and for jobs, affordable housing and education.

In Philadelphia activists have struggled for years to get out the truth about Mumia Abu-Jamal, unjustly imprisoned on Pennsylvania's death row for over 25 years. In 1997, when an interview with Abu-Jamal with Democracy Now! journalist Amy Goodman was scheduled to run on Temple University radio station WRTI, then-Gov. Tom Ridge effectively stopped the broadcast by threatening to cut state funding to the station unless it discontinued its contract with Pacifica radio.

Black-owned talk radio station WHAT, which frequently provided news of Abu-Jamal's case along with other community events, is now hosted by mainly white DJs. WDAS, a station previously known for playing Black artists, has switched its format to "urban contemporary."

"Disappearing Voices" traces the history of Black radio from the early 1940s when Black stations or white-owned stations with all-Black staff began to spring up across the South. As this phenomenon grew, more stations opened in urban areas from Boston to Los Angeles and played a major role in promoting the Black music industry. As these stations gained popularity, some white radio personalities began to adopt Black persona on the air.

Black radio stations took up key issues that other media would not touch, including the alleged rape of 15-year-old African-American Tawana Brawley by a group of white police officers in 1987, and the 1984 presidential campaign of civil rights activist Jesse Jackson. What set Black radio apart from all other media was the promotion of serious Black

talk and personality programming.

Profits, racism and the FCC

In the 1980s the drive for profits began to undermine Black radio, opening the way as well for the whitewashing of Black culture. MTV, for example, would play white artists singing R&B, but excluded Black artists. Stations that played "urban contemporary" music began to compete with those whose format focused more on traditional grassroots Black culture.

The biggest changes, however, were changes in Federal Communications Commission regulations. When radio program licenses were first given out, Black stations were excluded.

Jones noted that, "The FCC is supposed to protect the interests of the public by seeing that station owners operate with some level of responsibility to the public, which includes offering programming that serves the community as well as protecting station owners from being forced out of business by monopolies."

Yet in 2004 the FCC opened the door for conglomerates like Clear Channel and Infinity Broadcasting to buy up competing stations within the same listening area. The owners of WDAS, a popular Black-owned station in Philadelphia, were forced to sell the station. It was eventually purchased by Clear Channel for a sum considerably more than the original owners received. Clear Channel's use of syndicated DJs and canned music made programming into a McDonald's-like product — as uniform as possible — while creating a barrier between programmers and the communities they serve.

A further attack came with the growth of Arbitron Inc., a major supplier of radio-ratings information to advertisers that many say works to keep Black radio impoverished. Arbitron's rating system for the stations most listened to claims to include all population sectors, but in his film Washington interviews people of all ages in the Black community who have never been contacted by the company.

"Disappearing Voices" ends on the upbeat note that struggle by the people to hold the FCC accountable and to demand radio that speaks for and by the community can turn the situation around. This message resonated with members of the panel and audience, many of whom are already engaged in doing just that.

Prometheus Radio Project has been challenging FCC regulations while providing assistance for communities to develop their own radio using low-watt frequencies. Members of one such project, WPEB radio in West Philadelphia, spoke on the panel and from the audience. Crystle Smith described her efforts to provide a voice for Black youth with a program she directs on Change Radio.

Berta Joubert-Ceci spoke on the role that radio has played in the struggle to advance economic and social justice in Venezuela, where much of the media is still owned by major corporations opposed to the development of a socialist economy. She noted that all over this Latin American country, workers and poor people are broadcasting their own media to challenge the corporate control. □

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Pentagon presence in Horn of Africa exposes U.S. lies

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

In a March 12 interview, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson attempted to place the current Obama administration policy toward Somalia and the Horn of Africa in a non-military context. Carson did admit that support from both the George W. Bush and Obama administrations was approximately \$185 million over the last 19 months.

“We have provided limited military support to the Transitional Federal Government through the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM),” Carson noted. He continued, “We have supported the acquisition of nonlethal equipment to the governments of Burundi and to Uganda in particular as well as Djibouti, ranging from communications equipment and uniforms to transportation and support

for Ugandan military training of TFG forces.” (U.S. Department of State)

Carson answered a March 5 New York Times report that quoted Pentagon sources saying the U.S. planned to launch aerial bombardments of Somalia in an effort to retake large sections of the capital of Mogadishu and the country as a whole from the control of the Al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam resistance groups.

Carson said: “The United States does not plan, does not direct, and it does not coordinate the military operations of the TFG, and we have not and will not be providing direct support for any potential military offensives. Further, we are not providing nor paying for military advisers for the TFG. There is no desire to Americanize the conflict in Somalia.”

Nonetheless, Gen. William Ward, who heads the U.S. Africa Command, told a

Senate Armed Services Committee hearing that any effort by the TFG to retake Mogadishu would be “something that we would look to do in support, to the degree the transitional federal government can in fact re-exert control over Mogadishu, with the help of AMISOM and others.” (Xinhua News Agency, March 9)

Ward said that the current offensive by the “transition government to reclaim parts of Mogadishu, I think it’s something that we would look to do and support.” Along with Ward, Michigan Sen. Carl Levin, who chairs the Armed Services Committee, identified other countries on the continent where so-called “counter-terrorism” operations are taking place.

According to journalist Rick Rozoff, “The U.S. military has already been involved in counterinsurgency operations in Mali and Niger against ethnic Tuareg rebels, who have no conceivable ties to al-Qaeda, not

that one would know that from Levin’s comments.” Former U.S. diplomat Daniel Simpson was quoted recently in regard to the Pentagon’s involvement in Somalia as saying that the operation was designed to “test out AFRICOM ground and air forces in Djibouti for direct military action on the continent.” (Rozoff, scoop.co.nz, March 12)

Ward also told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the Africa Partnership Station, which is a U.S.-led effort designed to supposedly respond to requests by African states for assistance with security issues, was now conducting its fifth deployment on the continent. He continued by stating that the Africa Partnership Station “has expanded from its initial focus on the Gulf of Guinea to other African coastal nations.” (John Kruzel, Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs)

The articles written in the New York Times and other sources provide proof that the U.S. is escalating its military involvement in Africa. An attempt to dominate the global oil industry could be one of the strong motivating factors in the current U.S. policy.

Moreover, the U.S. imperialists do not want to see a government come to power in Somalia with the capacity to stabilize the political and military situation inside the country and also be independent of the foreign policy imperatives of the U.S. State Department and the Pentagon.

U.S. military intervention in Somalia during 1992-94 resulted in a tremendous defeat at the hands of the Somali resistance forces, who forced a withdrawal of the Marines and a political humiliation for the Bill Clinton administration.

The Bush administration’s engineered invasion by Ethiopia in December 2006 — as well as several aerial bombings — was also defeated by the Somali people, resulting in the withdrawal of the U.S.-backed forces in January 2009. The TFG and AMISOM hold out the only present hope for the imperialists to dominate this area of the Horn of Africa. □

Answering the EU’s attack on Cuba

By **Cheryl LaBash**

On March 11, using the pretext of a suicide of a prisoner in Cuba, European Union politicians attacked socialist Cuba, once again falsely alleging human-rights violations and demanding the release of a small number of paid U.S. agents imprisoned there. By doing so the EU Parliament not only ignored the overriding 50-year violation of Cuba’s democratic right to self-determination, but joined in it.

Cuba’s 1959 revolution set out to make human development and needs — not corporate or banking profits, not colonial or neo-colonial extraction of wealth and resources — the social priority. To punish Cuba for taking this independent path, Washington has mercilessly enforced an economic blockade and relentlessly attacked Cubans through bombings, invasions, biological warfare and attempts at political destabilization.

Thousands of Cubans and others have died in the U.S.-sponsored attacks — starting 50 years ago on March 4, 1960, when the French cargo ship “La Coubre” was detonated in Havana harbor. The ship was carrying arms to revolutionary Cuba from Belgium, which was defying U.S. orders to stop the shipment.

Former U.S. Central Intelligence agent Philip Agee has documented how the U.S. planted explosive-laced dolls in a Havana department store, burning it to the ground. On Sept. 4, 1997, Italian tourist Fabio di Celmo died in a Havana hotel bombing. These are but a small sample of the attacks.

Today five Cuban heroes are captives in U.S. prisons for attempting to protect Cuba from attacks orchestrated from U.S. territories. But Washington protects Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles, the admitted bombers of Cubana 455 in 1976, the first mid-air destruction of a civilian plane. These two killers are free to roam the streets of Miami.

Amazingly, Cuba has not only developed human well-being internally — it is one of the few countries on track to meet the U.N. Millennium Development Goals despite the impact of hurricanes and the U.S. blockade — but has shared selfless solidarity around the world, opening its medical schools, distributing its literacy methods, and assisting the African continent to decisively smash the racist apartheid regime in South Africa. Today more than a thousand Cuban and Cuban-trained doctors are providing medical aid to Haitian earthquake survivors.

Washington’s admitted policy has been and is to create such desperate conditions

In September 2005, while flooded New Orleans’ Black residents hung onto roof tops, 1,586 Cuban doctors with tons of medical supplies were refused U.S. permission to help. Some deployed later to earthquake-devastated Pakistan and many are now in Haiti or Chile.

inside Cuba that capitalist exploitation can be re-imposed.

This policy has failed. And in Latin America especially, Cuba has broken out of the imperialist-imposed isolation.

Intervention by other means

Facing these setbacks, Washington cultivates pseudo-librarians or purported journalists, ladies-in-white, bloggers and others in Cuba who are funded and supported by dollars from the U.S. in an attempt to organize counter-revolution by other means.

That is the origin of the prisoner who in February committed suicide by hunger strike. He did this with the encouragement of U.S. imperialism. Cuban doctors had tried their best to keep him alive, feeding him intravenously in a major Havana hospital.

At a conference to encourage increased educational exchanges with Cuba, former chief of the U.S. Interest Section in Havana, Wayne Smith, said that the United States “is not ‘in the best position’ to speak of hunger strikes, given the U.S. military’s practice of force-feeding hunger strikers at the detention camp for terror suspects in Guantanamo, Cuba.” (www.laprensasa.com)

The EU has not condemned U.S. human rights violations or demanded the release of U.S. political prisoners like Leonard Peltier, Mumia Abu-Jamal, the Angola 2, and the Scott sisters. Nor has it criticized the conditions for the more than 2 million people imprisoned here, disproportionately African-American and Latino/a, or the beatings and deaths of Black and Brown people at the hands of racist police merely for driving, walking, or living in the racist USA.

The capitalist state here kills death-row prisoners regardless of their innocence. The Pentagon kills wholesale with wars of occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan. Right-wing and social-democratic EU



WW PHOTO

politicians vote for their armies to join the criminal U.S. occupations against the will of the EU populations and they vote to condemn Cuba, in both cases to promote imperialist domination. □

Workers resist with fourth general strike

By **Kris Hamel**

Within a week after the March 5 mass demonstrations and general strike, tens of thousands of angry Greek workers marched through Athens to protest austerity measures enacted to reduce Greece’s debt. Riot police fired teargas as demonstrators threw rocks and firebombs outside the Parliament building on March 11.

Workers, retirees and youth took to the streets in 68 cities and towns throughout the country. Another 24-hour strike by public and private sector workers brought business-as-usual to a standstill. In Athens the rail system operated for a few hours to allow workers to take part in the demonstration. Protesters and striking workers chanted slogans including, “Real jobs, higher pay!” while banners hung from apartment buildings that read, “No more sacrifices, war against war.” (guardian.co.uk, March 11)

The Greek government has imposed further wage cuts for public sector workers, hiring and pension freezes and consumer tax hikes in an attempt to stem a skyrocketing budget deficit and save \$65 billion. These cutbacks are on top of a previous \$15 billion austerity plan aimed to reduce the country’s 2010 deficit from 12.7 percent of annual output to 8.7 percent.

GREECE

The country has been under intense pressure from the governments of the more powerful imperialist countries in the European Union, like France and Germany, who want to keep a strong euro and pay all debts to the bankers.

“They are trying to make workers pay the price for this crisis,” said Yiananis Panagopoulos, head of the GSEE, the country’s largest union. (Associated Press, March 11) Vasilis Petropoulos, a leader of the militant All-Workers Militant Front (PAME), was the main speaker at a strike rally. “There is no national risk. No national duty calls the workers to sacrifice their rights. There is only the greed of the capitalists for profit,” he said. (inter.kke.gr)

The March 11 strike and nationwide protests were the fourth such actions by Greek workers within one month. Even big-business-owned media in the United States were forced to cover the militant actions of these workers. Video and photographs often showed elderly pensioners and retirees being brutalized by police.

The Greek workers should be an inspiration to poor and working people around the world who are sick and tired of bearing the brunt of the capitalist economic crisis. These heroic workers — young and old, employed and unemployed — are refusing to bow down and “sacrifice” to keep the profit system afloat. □

Inmigrantes merecen legalización Derechos plenos para todos/as los/as trabajadores/as

Por Teresa Gutiérrez

El 21 de marzo, decenas o quizás cientos de miles de personas se manifestarán a favor de los derechos de los/as inmigrantes en Washington, D.C.

La acción surge por la frustración y la profunda ira que existe en la comunidad de inmigrantes y entre sus partidarios porque a pesar de exigir continuamente derechos plenos para los/as inmigrantes, especialmente la legalización de los/as indocumentados/as, estos pedidos han sido ignorados por Washington.

La enorme demostración del 21 de marzo será una continuación de la monumental mareada de millones de trabajadores/as en la primavera de 2006, cuando los/as inmigrantes salieron de las sombras e irrumpieron en la escena, cambiando para siempre el panorama político en este país.

Los/as inmigrantes y sus partidarios/as saben que los/as indocumentados/as ya se han ganado la legalización. De hecho, se lo han ganado por cientos de veces.

Los/as trabajadores/as se ven obligados/as a venir al mismo país — EEUU — que ha creado las condiciones en sus países de origen que no les deja otra opción que la de salir.

El TLCAN, las guerras auspiciadas por EEUU en Cen-

troamérica, los acuerdos con los países exportadores de emigrantes como Filipinas, la intervención y ocupación de Haití, el golpe de estado en Honduras, el rechazo a pagar indemnizaciones por el saqueo histórico de África, son todos ejemplos de las políticas de EEUU en el exterior que conduce a que millones de personas se vean obligadas a abandonar penosamente sus países en busca de supervivencia.

Luego cuando llegan a EEUU se ven obligados/as a trabajar en la economía clandestina sin que tengan ningún derecho.

Es un sistema perfecto para la clase capitalista: una fuerza laboral vulnerable, explotable, desechable y barata que debe obedecer los caprichos de los patrones.

A pesar de la mantra que se repite constantemente de que la política de inmigración está quebrada, el hecho es que funciona bien. Pero está funcionando para los empresarios y los banqueros, no para el pueblo.

La manifestación del 21 de marzo y todos los esfuerzos para ganar los derechos de los/as inmigrantes son extremadamente importantes. Pero lo que saldrá de esta demostración es igualmente importante.

¿Qué tipo de reforma?

Hay un movimiento generalizado que aboga por lo que se llama una reforma integral de la inmigración. Es importante seguir elaborando exactamente qué tipo de reforma migratoria es necesaria. El movimiento — no sólo los/as inmigrantes, sino también el movimiento sindical, el anti-guerra y todos los movimientos progresistas — deben exigir una reforma migratoria que esté completamente a favor de los/as trabajadores/as.

Esta clase de reforma elevará el nivel de vida no sólo de los/as inmigrantes, sino también de toda la clase trabajadora.

Esta reforma migratoria debe incluir por lo menos:

- ▶ La legalización inmediata de todos/as los/as indocumentados/as en este país
- ▶ El fin de la militarización de la frontera, que es un acto de guerra y fomenta una mentalidad xenofóbica
- ▶ Detener las redadas inmediatamente y poner fin a la división de las familias
- ▶ Un fin a la política de EEUU que crea las condiciones para la migración, tales como el apoyo al golpe de Honduras
- ▶ Derogación de las políticas comerciales de EEUU como el TLCAN
- ▶ Trabajo para todos/as los/as trabajadores/as en este país, independientemente de su lugar de nacimiento
- ▶ Educación para todos/as, independientemente del lugar de nacimiento o estatus económico
- ▶ No a los programas de trabajadores/as invitados
- ▶ Reconocimiento del papel que desempeña el cambio climático en la creación de refugiados/as, y las políticas para evitarlo

Es evidente la postura del Partido Republicano sobre la cuestión migratoria. Aunque hay pequeñas diferencias aquí y allá, este partido sigue manteniendo una viciosa posición anti-inmigrante. La extrema derecha dentro y fuera del partido utiliza la inmigración como uno de los temas para impulsar una feroz campaña derechista. Es racista y tiene como objetivo al primer presidente negro de una manera inexcusable.

En respuesta al masivo esfuerzo organizativo para la manifestación del 21 de marzo, un grupo extremista anti-inmigrante llamado NumbersUSA celebró una conferencia de prensa. En ella, un miembro dijo, “... la nueva reina de la beneficencia

de hoy son las mujeres procedentes de México con un montón de bebés. Nosotros tenemos bebés, ellas tienen dependientes”.

Esto está dirigido absolutamente contra la gente pobre, no importa el origen nacional ni el color. La mujer mexicana es el objetivo de hoy, pero su retórica va dirigida contra todas las mujeres pobres.

Mientras que la posición de los republicanos y la extrema derecha está clara y es fácil de combatir, la cuestión no es tan clara con los demócratas.

Dos importantes proyectos de ley de los demócratas van a ser discutidos en el Congreso. Uno de ellos es del Senador Chuck Schumer de Nueva York y el otro del representante de Illinois, Luis Gutiérrez. Gutiérrez ya presentó su proyecto de ley en diciembre de 2009; Schumer no lo ha hecho todavía.

El proyecto de ley del representante Gutiérrez es el más progresista. Gutiérrez ha estado viajando por todo el país hablando con una enorme audiencia acerca de pasar la “reforma migratoria integral”. Su oratoria llena de orgullo a los/as latinos/as por su herencia.

Su proyecto de ley de 700 páginas oficialmente se llama la Ley de Reforma Integral de la Inmigración para la Seguridad y la Prosperidad de América.

Pero el proyecto va junto al argumento de que la cuestión migratoria y por lo tanto los/as inmigrantes son parte integrante de la llamada “guerra contra el terrorismo”. Cualquiera que sean sus creencias personales, los/as demócratas no han enfrentado este pensamiento militarista.

No hacen el frente y declaran que los verdaderos terroristas están en el Pentágono y en Wall Street y se lleva la batuta en Washington. No van a decir que el verdadero terror en la sociedad es la política que cierra las fábricas, desaloja a las personas de sus casas, violan el medio ambiente y así sucesivamente.

Los/as trabajadores/as en busca de sobrevivir no son terroristas. Son las víctimas del terror. Todo proyecto de ley de inmigración que tiene la “ejecución del orden público” en su fondo, es un proyecto de ley de inmigración que debe ser rechazado.

Desafortunadamente, los demócratas le dirán al movimiento que esto es lo mejor que pueden conseguir. Cuando los/as defensores/as de los/as inmigrantes le pidieron a Schumer que se abstuviera de llamar a los/as indocumentado/as “extranjeros ilegales”, él se negó. Schumer dijo que así es la cosa.

El movimiento debe decidir

A lo largo de la historia de los EEUU, la clase capitalista y los funcionarios en Washington que la sirven siempre han manifestado de una manera u otra, “Eso es lo que es”.

Ellos no señalan que la historia demuestra lo contrario. Cuando los/as trabajadores/as están en movimiento, cuando el movimiento es masivo, “eso es lo que es” puede cambiar radicalmente de un día a otro.

La esclavitud fue abolida, aún cuando muchos dijeron que no lo sería. Las mujeres obtuvieron el derecho a votar cuando muchos dijeron que no podían. La guerra de Vietnam terminó debido a la resistencia del pueblo de Vietnam, pero el movimiento en los EEUU también fue instrumental.

El seguro por desempleo, la jornada de 8 horas y los beneficios sociales fueron ganancias que el pueblo fue capaz de arrebatar a la clase capitalista. Nada nos fue dado. Todo ello se ganó.

La legalización sin acciones policiales y sin una militarización de la frontera se puede ganar.

Pero esto sólo puede suceder si el pueblo está luchando por sus propios intereses independientes de los demócratas. El Partido Demócrata ha demostrado una y otra vez que pone un freno a la lucha. Sólo lucha por pequeñas soluciones, y nunca le hará frente a los poderes

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1º de MAYO en UNION SQUARE para exigir:
¡LEGALIZACIÓN AHORA!

Hoy, 21 de marzo marchamos en Washington, DC para decirle a la administración de Obama que demandamos reconozca una reforma migratoria ahora.
¡No queremos cualquier cosa que se les ocurra! Necesitamos una reforma migratoria con:

- ▶ **Legalización inmediatamente.**
- ▶ **No a los programas de trabajadores huésped.**
- ▶ **No a la militarización de las fronteras y a las redadas.**
- ▶ **Eliminar el Tratado de Libre Comercio y termine la política internacional de los EEUU que promueven la migración forzosa como el apoyo al golpe militar en Honduras.**
- ▶ **Legalización especial a los inmigrantes haitianos y que finalice la ocupación militar por los EEUU de Haití.**
- ▶ **Educación es un derecho para todos los estudiantes independientemente de donde nacieron o de su procedencia económica.**
- ▶ **No a la práctica de traficar mujeres.**
- ▶ **Los EEUU debe suspender su respaldo a los gobiernos como las Filipinas que exportan sus trabajadores.**
- ▶ **Necesitamos una reforma que beneficie a todos los trabajadores. Eso significa empleos para TODOS.**
- ▶ **¡SI A LA SOLIDARIDAD.**

Decirle no a ley del Senador Schumer!
La inmigración no es un asunto de seguridad: es un asunto de derechos humanos y de los obrero/as. Por eso marchamos hoy.

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